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Sadistic 'research' on prisoners

Mengele experimented to create Hitler's master race

Josef Mengele is vilified not just for the 400,000 people he's accused of killing, but for the perverse imagination he brought to the task.

Mengele's 1959 arrest warrant, signed by a West German judge, charges he used his doctor's status at the Auschwitz concentration camp to do sadistic "experiments" on prisoners.

Claiming legitimate research, Mengele (pronounced MEN-guh-lay) shot women and cut off their breasts for study, subjected prisoners to extreme X-rays to watch their skin blister and injected deadly diseases into the healthy to watch them die.

The goal of his genetic experiments was to create the blond, blue-eyed master race Hitler desired. He experimented on twins to learn how to promote their birth as a way of repopulating post-war Germany.

Born to wealthy Bavarians 74 years ago, Mengele's reputation wasn't widespread after the war. This apparently allowed him to escape to South America before the magnitude of his crimes became known.

Documents indicate that Mengele may have been held by the U.S. Army in a prison camp in Germany in 1947, but was routinely released because officials didn't know his position at Auschwitz or the charges against him.

Auschwitz prisoners recall him as a handsome, well-built, carefully groomed man who determined who should live or die by signaling with the flick of a wrist.

He joined Hitler's elite S.S. guard in 1939 and was promoted to the post of chief Auschwitz physician in 1943.

He had studied philosophy as a young man in Munich and got his medical degree at the University of Frankfurt.

Remarkably little hard evidence about Mengele's movements is available. This much is known: He survived the war, lived near his Bavarian birthplace and fled to Argentina about 1950, was granted Paraguayan citizenship in 1959 and stripped of it in 1979.

Beyond that, it's speculation.

Intelligence reports suggest Mengele went underground in 1949, obtaining travel documents under the name "Gregorio Gregori."

He reportedly has used more than a dozen aliases in South America.

Before his presence in Paraguay sparked worldwide controversy, he's said to have practiced medicine in rural areas populated by German immigrants.

Declassified intelligence documents suggest he has since worked as an auto mechanic and a drug dealer. There are reports he kept bees as a hobby while in Paraguay.

He has married twice and has several children. His first wife — who was with him at Auschwitz — lives in a German-speaking section of Italy. She recently told a West German newspaper that accounts of his crimes are "all lies and propaganda."

MENGELE: Most recent photo, taken in 1971 in Paraguay

— Gregory Katz

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